

Thematic Essays

Thematics are straightforward essays that can be conquered by remembering a few simple tips.

1. Address the task.
2. Remember you can use other topics other than the suggestions.
3. Organize your thoughts.
4. Know how you are being graded.

Tip #1

The most important thing to remember when writing a thematic essay is to address the task.

Sample Task

From the January 2008 Global Regents Exam:

Theme: Change

Identify *two* nonpolitical revolutions that brought about important intellectual, economic, and/or social changes to societies and for each:

- Describe *one* change brought about by this nonpolitical revolution
- Discuss an impact this nonpolitical revolution had on a specific society or societies



A way to be sure you will stick to the task is to develop your thesis statement using it. Put the task into a general thesis statement (main idea of the essay) and then make connections to it throughout the body of the essay.

Thesis Example:

Nonpolitical revolutions brought about many changes while impacting societies.

Tip #2

Use the suggestions that are provided with every thematic essay task but don't be afraid to think outside the box.

Suggestions for the sample task are:

Neolithic Revolution (10,000 - 6,000 BCE), the Commercial Revolution (11th -18th centuries), the Scientific Revolution (16th -18th centuries), the Enlightenment (17th - 18th centuries), the Agricultural Revolutions (18th - 19th centuries), the Industrial Revolution in Europe (18th - 19th centuries), and the Green Revolution (20th century)

You may want to choose the Renaissance or Reformation. They are not on the list but you can definitely argue them as a nonpolitical change. You can *never* use examples from the U.S..



- Choose the topics you know the most about.
- You are never limited to the suggestions but you must make sure your choices connect to and complete the task.
- If you don't know which one to choose, brainstorm ideas about each and see what comes to you. Be sure to jot down those ideas so you have a visual.

Tip #3

How you organize your information is almost as important as the information itself.

The following is a suggestion on how to organize your essay:

Part of Essay	Suggested Format	Applied to this Task
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lead Sentence2. Definition of Theme3. Main Points4. Thesis Statement	Many changes in history have occurred without violence. A revolution is simply a change within the norms of society. The Neolithic Revolution changed the course of history when people began to settle down in permanent locations. History also drastically changed with the Industrial Revolution as areas began mass-producing goods. Nonpolitical revolutions brought about many changes while impacting societies.
Body Paragraphs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Topic sentence2. Task Completion<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Part 1- Part 23. Concluding sentence	The Neolithic Revolution started around the year 10,000 BCE when nomadic peoples began to settle down. During the Paleolithic Era, nomadic people moved from place to place in search of food. Men hunted and women gathered. Over time, women began to realize that fruits and vegetables could be domesticated. This changed the course of history since people started to farm in permanent settlements. Over time, agricultural surpluses allowed these settlements to grow into complex civilizations. These surpluses of food meant that not everyone had to farm, freeing up people to have other jobs. Cities developed, complex governments and religions were created, a system of writing was used, a department of public works was needed to service the people, art and architecture were emphasized, and job specialization led to social classes. These basic features of a civilization were the same throughout the world, although how they were implemented depended on where. Egypt was greatly impacted by the Neolithic Revolution. Pharaohs ruled society and were seen as gods. Records were kept by scribes, written in demotic, which was a simpler form of hieroglyphics. Historians have been able to decode the complex writing thanks to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in the 18 th century. The Egyptians were polytheistic, believing in a variety of god, most of which were connected to their geography. The most famous architectural achievement is the building of pyramids. These large structures served as tombs for pharaohs during the Old Kingdom. Without the discovery of farming, civilizations would not have been able to develop.
Conclusion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Restate Thesis2. Summarize Main Points3. Final Thought	Many changes were brought about in societies through nonpolitical revolutions. The Neolithic and Industrial Revolutions significantly changed the course of history during their respective time periods. Revolutions, both nonviolent and violent, will continue to alter the course of history.

Obviously you would need a second body paragraph on the Industrial Revolution for this sample essay but you get the idea on how to organize your thoughts and connect to the task.



There is no one correct way to organize your information, but it must be logical and clear. This is a great place to practice all those English techniques you have learned!

Tip #4

Know how you will be graded.

The following is the rubric that we must use on the NYS Regents Exams for both Global and US History.

Thematic Essay Scoring Rubric

Score of a 5:

- Shows a thorough understanding of the theme or problem
- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth
- Is more analytical than descriptive
- Richly supports essay with relevant facts, examples and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of a 4:

- Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly
- Is both descriptive and analytical
- Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of a 3:

- Develops all aspects of the task but with little depth or develops most aspects of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a satisfactory and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

Score of a 2:

- Minimally develops all aspects of the task or develops some aspects of the task in some depth
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak or isolated application or analysis
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/ or conclusion

Score of a 1:

- Minimally develops some aspects of the task
- Is descriptive; may lack understanding, application or analysis
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; may include inaccuracies
- May demonstrate a weakness in organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack introduction and/ or a conclusion

Score of a 0:

- Fails to develop the task or may only refer to the theme in a general way; *OR* includes no relevant facts, examples or details; *OR* includes the theme, task or suggestions as copied from the test booklet; *OR* is illegible; *OR* is a blank paper



- Please note that in order to earn a Regents 4 or 5 you must use analysis – the how, why, so what.
- Always use specific details and key terms as often as possible. You had to learn those vocab words for a reason.
- If you are stuck, ask for help. We can't tell you answers but we can help you relax and unblock your brain. The worst thing you could do is not write an essay.